



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-fourth session

1-12 March 2010

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the Women's National Commission, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.



Statement

1. The Women's National Commission is the official independent advisory body on women of the Government of the United Kingdom. To mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the organization consulted with its partners, whose views are reflected in its publication "What's Beijing Got to Do with Me?". The publication is intended to inform the Government and the United Nations.

Poverty

2. Historically, many older women in the United Kingdom are affected by poverty because they have not built up assets and savings. Only 30 per cent of women get the full basic state retirement pension, compared to 85 per cent of men.¹ In Northern Ireland, it is 25 per cent of women and support is needed for the poorest women, pensioners and mothers bringing up children alone.²

3. Before women have children, their average pay is 91 per cent of men's, but drops to 67 per cent thereafter.³

Education

4. More recently, girls have outperformed boys at school. Their success does not, however, always translate into well-paid careers owing to gender stereotyping in the workplace, traditional caring roles and the aspirations of many young women.

5. Our partners have commented that many girls in the United Kingdom need to see women in leadership positions, and provision for non-violent, equal relationships between girls and boys to be taught in schools. Boys are not taught to share responsibility for household chores and childcare, so women still do 70 per cent of the housework. There are serious concerns that schooling for immigrant women is inadequate: 9 per cent cannot read.⁴ More work could be done to ensure that disabled and refugee girls are not discriminated against.

Health

6. Many women have told us that women themselves should be more involved in the design of health-care services which meet their particular needs. Health services could be more sensitive to different cultures: lesbians still report hostility from

¹ See Department of Work and Pensions, The Gender Impact of Pensions Reform, <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/genderimpactassessment.pdf>.

² A wide range of measures of economic inequality in Northern Ireland concluded that single mothers were by far the most deprived group, see Scullion, F., Hillyard, P., and McLaughlin, E. (2005), *Poverty and Social Exclusion Project: Lone Parent Households in Northern Ireland*, Bulletin No. 1, February 2005, Belfast: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and Borooh, V. (2007), "Measuring Economic Inequality: Deprivation, Economising and Possessing", *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 6, issue 1 (Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, shadow report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, March 2008).

³ Brewer, M. and Paull, G. (2006), "New borns and new schools: critical times in women's employment", research report No. 308, Department for Work and Pensions.

⁴ See http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/12inequalities_experienced_by_gypsy_and_traveller_communities_a_review.pdf.

mental health professionals,⁵ and immigrant women suffer high rates of miscarriages, stillbirths and maternal mortality.⁶

7. Partners felt the United Kingdom Government should extend the abortion law to cover Northern Ireland⁷ and concerns were raised over the lack of access to emergency contraception, and the intimidation which stops women from accessing information and advice.

Violence

8. The Government consulted, in the spring of 2009, on how to combat violence against women and girls, including the development of a cross-cutting government approach. The Women's National Commission played a major part in this regard, hosting 40 focus groups as the partner of choice for Government departments with a diverse range of hard-to-reach women. A task force of health professionals was set up in response to issues raised during that consultation. The Commission has also established a new working group to consider the potential threat of trafficked women to coincide with the 2012 London Olympics, and it will share the information obtained with Ministers.

⁵ King, M. and McKeown, E., "Mental health and social wellbeing of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals in England and Wales", Mind, For better mental health, 2003.

⁶ See http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/12inequalities_experienced_by_gypsy_and_traveller_communities_a_review.pdf.

⁷ This statement is based on the following evidence from organizations in Northern Ireland:

(a) Statement of Dr. Audrey Simpson, Director of the Family Planning Association Northern Ireland (www.fpa.org.uk): "A Northern Irish woman in the twenty-first century who is the victim of rape or incest is expected to give birth, or find up to £2,000 to travel for treatment in England where women have the right to access safe abortion. These are a vulnerable group of women who need support — not to be forced to find money and travel long distances on their own".

(b) Submission of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (March 2008) urging the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in considering the sixth periodic report of the United Kingdom, to call on the United Kingdom Government to provide equal access to reproductive health care for women in Northern Ireland: "The Commission recommends that the Committee urge the United Kingdom Government to: respond to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by calling for the same access to reproductive health-care services and rights in Northern Ireland as are available in Great Britain".

(c) In its shadow report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in March 2008, the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform recommended that: the Government should ensure that the legal regulation of abortion in Northern Ireland acknowledge and be compliant with the State's international human rights obligations; women in Northern Ireland should be able to secure early access to abortion services.

(d) In a letter to Members of Parliament, sent on 8 July, the Alliance for Choice (<http://allianceforchoice.org>), based in Derry, Northern Ireland, appealed to the Members to use the free vote on abortion to extend to women in Northern Ireland the right to this vital health care. Signatories to the letter included Dawn Purvis, MLA Belfast East; Eileen Calder, Director, Belfast Rape Crisis Centre; John Corey, General Secretary, Northern Ireland Public Sector Alliance; Jimmy Kelly, Regional Secretary, UNITE; Patricia McKeown, Regional Secretary, UNISON; and Margaret Ward, Director, Women's Resource and Development Agency.

(e) On 18 July 2008, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted that "the Abortion Act (1967) does not extend to Northern Ireland where, with limited exceptions, abortion continues to be illegal with detrimental consequences for women's health ... In line with its general recommendation 24 on women and health and the Beijing Platform for Action, the Committee also urges the State party to give consideration to the amendment of the abortion law so as to remove punitive provisions imposed on women who undergo abortion".

9. Partner organizations have informed the Women's National Commission that what exists across the United Kingdom should be mapped and good practices adopted.⁸ In this regard, there has been support for the Scottish model. There are a number of important issues to be addressed, including the need for: additional specialized refuges for women travellers in the United Kingdom in view of the fact that, despite high levels of abuse, there is only one;⁹ provision of increased services for people in same-sex relationships experiencing domestic violence; and more attention to the level and type of violence faced by women with learning disabilities. In addition, there is a need for better rape conviction rates. Partner organizations have welcomed the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change.

Conflict

10. The United Kingdom Government's national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), while comprehensive, is seen to relate only to other countries, despite the fact that Northern Ireland is a country emerging from conflict with very few women in key institutions. The plan for Northern Ireland could include indicators and actions, and its executive branch should have its own action plan with targets. Women should be involved not only in peacemaking but also post-conflict reconstruction peacekeeping, negotiations of agreements to prevent conflict and post-conflict negotiations.

11. There were also calls to give sensitive treatment to women refugees, who need translation services, better health advice and more involvement in decision-making.

Economy

12. In 2006, the Women and Work Commission published a report⁹ highlighting the strong economic case for women's economic participation. The Government accepted the majority of the Commission's recommendations.

13. The economic downturn has brought women's economic activity into sharp relief; many feel that pregnancy and maternity should not lead to discrimination against women during this recession. It is estimated that about 30,000 women a year lose their jobs due to pregnancy. Furthermore, partners felt strongly that laws on equal pay are not working; the gender pay gap is still 22.8 per cent¹⁰ although public service agreement targets have been introduced to address this and the Government has produced documents based on research conducted on the impact of the economic downturn on women.¹¹

Women in power

14. Women's disproportionate responsibility for domestic and caring responsibilities can limit their political activity. In addition, women's poverty has a significant effect on their participation in the political process. There are calls for more women at all levels to make the important decisions which affect their lives. There is

⁸ Consultative report from Northern Ireland prepared by Commissioner Bronagh Hinds.

⁹ Women and Work Commission, "Shaping a Fairer Future: a review of the recommendations of the Women and Work Commission three years on".

¹⁰ See United Kingdom Government response to Beijing to 15 questionnaire, May 2009.

¹¹ See Government Equalities Office, *The economic downturn — the concerns and experiences of women and families*, <http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/GEO%20Economic%20downturn-%20WEB.pdf>.

currently Government activity to encourage greater numbers of women to participate in public life, and the Women's National Commission has been holding a series of workshops to increase civic participation.

15. There have been calls for a "Minister for Women" in Scotland¹² and a dedicated Women's Minister needed in Northern Ireland. Some partner organizations felt that most of the political parties had not made use of the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 — none of the parties in Northern Ireland have used it.¹³ The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently noted that since its 2004 report no progress has been made in achieving a gender balance in decision-making bodies in Wales.

Ways to make equality happen

16. The Gender Equality Duty, introduced in 2007, has been widely welcomed as a positive mechanism to tackle gender issues. However, this is not fully understood by every public body; training is needed for Government officials in gender analysis and budgeting. The Women's National Commission commissioners have consistently championed the need to implement the provisions appropriately and there is a discrete commissioner's group to look into the development of an "equalities bill" to ensure that women's interests are both protected and promoted within national legislation.

17. Partners have called for a select committee on equality in the United Kingdom Parliament, and a committee specifically devoted to gender issues in the Northern Ireland Assembly.¹³

Human rights

18. Our partners have called for more information about the rights of women in this country. Government action should include training in human rights and equal rights for women, in particular teachers and Members of Parliament.

19. It is felt that a bill of rights is needed for Northern Ireland, reflecting the recommendations of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. The Government should accept the recommendations made by the Commission on the rights for women detained in Northern Ireland.¹³

The media

20. Partners organizations feel that there is a need for more "real women" on television, and fewer anorexic stereotypes. There were calls for fewer provocative photographs of women in the tabloid press or in advertisements and less reporting of what women politicians wear and more on what they say. More could be done to present women's views on all issues, not just women's issues.

21. Women are concerned with being excluded from work such as programming and development. There have been calls for women with learning disabilities and

¹² Taking Forward the Government Economic Strategy: A discussion paper on tackling poverty, inequality and deprivation in Scotland, Engender, 2008 ("it would be productive to create the position of a Minister for Women at the devolved level in the Scottish Parliament").

¹³ See Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, shadow report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, March 2008.

mental illness to be depicted in a positive light. Senior management teams of major broadcasters in Wales are 44 per cent female; the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that only the Welsh language weekly "Golwg" has a female editor.

The environment

22. More could be done to involve more women in making plans for transport and the environment, to ensure they meet women's needs. Most public transport users are women and more could be done to promote environmental issues in schools. In Newcastle, delegates argued strongly for the need to empower women as consumers to bring about lasting change.

23. Partner organizations feel that the Government must focus on the gender impact of climate change and the importance of gender action within the Climate Change Act. The Welsh Assembly could use gender budgeting in this area, for example working alongside the Wales Gender Budget Group to better understand how climate change financing can impact women's participation and representation.

Girls

24. Mothers across the United Kingdom want better opportunities for their daughters, and less stereotyping in careers. Many girls leave school lacking the confidence to advance further in their education and training. The United Kingdom has among the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe. Girls should continue to receive full education while pregnant. At present some get very limited amounts of home tutoring, resulting in even more limited career prospects.¹⁴

25. There is a growing concern that girls are being "sexualized" far too early in life and that "gang culture" is especially damaging and dangerous for young girls in the United Kingdom. More investment, funding and resources in youth work for girls are needed.

¹⁴ The percentage of 16- to 19-year-old mothers in education, employment or training is 33 per cent (2006-2008); see United Kingdom Government response to the Beijing to 15 questionnaire, May 2009.

**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General
16 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women**Fifty-fourth session**

1-12 March 2010

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement submitted by the African Women's Development and Communication Network, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

Statement

The statement was prepared during the Africa Women's NGO Consultative Meeting, convened in the margins of the 8th Africa Regional Conference on Women (Beijing +15) on 15 and 16 November 2009 in Banjul.

Preamble:

We, the representatives of various civil society organizations assembled as the African Women's Caucus attending the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in 2010 and also representing the voices of millions of African women, youth and girls,

Having widely consulted with different stakeholders prior to and during the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women on the progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Africa since the last review (Beijing +10),

Having reviewed the Africa Regional NGO shadow report on Beijing +15, which incorporates national and subregional reviews from women's civil society organizations and networks,

Recognizing that the Beijing +15 review process is taking place at a time of both great opportunity and challenge for African women in the realization of their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights,

Considering with great concern that although the process of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action over the past 15 years has utilized significant resources, progress has remained minimal, slow and fragmented and has not resulted in fundamental changes in the lives of the majority of women in Africa,

Noting that the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and human rights instruments that reinforce its provisions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, involves a range of stakeholders, and that the primary responsibility rests with the Member States of the United Nations,

Also noting that the Beijing commitments have been repeatedly articulated as human rights guarantees that States parties are obligated to protect, promote and fulfil to the fullest extent possible, and that this requires visible and consistent political will and resources in order to deliver on this agenda,

We therefore highlight the following actions, among others specified in the Beijing +15 Africa NGO shadow report, as an urgent call on Governments in Africa to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action over the next five years:

(a) Ensure universal ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, as an indication of political commitment to human rights standards, and urgently domesticate in full the instruments on women's rights to provide a legal basis for protecting, fulfilling and enforcing provisions on women's social and economic rights in particular;

(b) Accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and all women's rights commitments through a multisectoral approach, that States committed to in Beijing in 1995, by the end of the first three years of the Africa Women's Decade;

(c) Ensure that structures established to lead the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda have adequate resources, as an indication of Member States' political commitment to women's advancement;

(d) Ratify the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, harmonize the electoral laws and democratic structures with its provisions and consistently implement the African Union gender parity commitments at national and local governance levels by 2015;

(e) Ensure that electoral and policy reforms are fully implemented to guarantee women's full and effective participation in leadership and decision-making in terms of equal representation, participation in political parties and as key stakeholders in the democratic processes of their countries;

(f) Allocate funds from the African Union Women's Fund for training and education programmes for women politicians aspiring for elected positions, as a priority, to enhance their capacities to effectively participate in and influence decision-making processes;

(g) Take deliberate efforts to nominate female candidates for the position of Chairperson of the African Union Commission as a sign of equal sharing of leadership and responsibilities for delivering on the development agenda in Africa;

(h) Enact freedom of information legislation, in line with internationally accepted human rights principles and standards, in order to guarantee citizens' access to critical information, in particular African women, to facilitate their full and effective participation in governance, democratic processes and development;

(i) Urgently implement their commitments to change attitudes and practices that negatively impact on the protection, promotion and fulfilment of women's rights by using the media, inter alia, as a powerful tool for building public and targeted awareness and education on women's rights and advancement;

(j) Meet reporting requirements on progress made towards gender equality in Africa and where there is non-compliance and call upon the African Union to institute additional mechanisms for ensuring accountability under the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004);

(k) Address the burning issue of impunity in Africa with regard to violations of human rights of African citizens, particularly violence against women and children in conflict situations, and ensure fulfilment of commitments to protect women and children from all forms of violence;

(l) Prioritize women's health as a human rights issue, particularly maternal, sexual and reproductive health, as a critical component of sustainable development in Africa, and intensify actions to reduce the feminization of HIV/AIDS;

(m) Invest in women's education with particular attention to science and technology training, to ensure that African women benefit from the changing global technology framework;

(n) Build the capacity of rural women in agriculture and strengthen women's land rights as part of the process of implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme and the African Union Land Policy Framework and Guidelines;

(o) Invest in research on climate change in Africa and its implications for women, address gender dimensions with respect to mitigation, adaptability, response and compensation mechanisms, and invest in research and technology on clean and renewable energy sources, ensuring that gender analysis is integrated;

(p) Desist from engaging in bilateral and international trade and economic agreements that undermine the regional integration process and impact negatively on women's rights and advancement;

(q) Invest in women's entrepreneurship for effective economic empowerment, eliminate barriers to women starting businesses and small/medium enterprises, and commit sufficient resources to infrastructural development that facilitates trade within countries and across borders in the region;

(r) Ensure that gender equality is incorporated in all planning and budgeting processes at different levels, and also ensure the deliberate development of sex-disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators, as one of the ways to guarantee effective implementation of all the Beijing commitments and as a strategy for promoting, protecting and fulfilling the right of African women to development.

**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General
18 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women**Fifty-fourth session**

1-12 March 2010

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the Armenian International Women's Association, the Association catholique internationale des services pour la jeunesse feminine, the Coalition against Trafficking in Women, the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Council of Jewish Women, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, the International Federation of Women Lawyers, the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, the International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Passionists International, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Soroptimist International, the Salvation Army, UNANIMA International, the United States Committee for the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the World Youth Alliance, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

Statement

1. We, non-governmental organizations working towards the elimination of violence against women and the realization of gender equality, reaffirm the message in the Beijing Declaration, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, that “violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace”. Although enormous efforts have been made to address violence against women, limited progress has been made in the past 15 years to achieve the objectives set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action.

2. Trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation not only have a negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights and dignity of the victims but also impede the achievement of gender equality for all women and girls. In particular, there are serious consequences in many of the critical areas identified in the Beijing Platform for Action.

Empowerment of women and girls

3. The Beijing Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals recognize that the empowerment and advancement of women is a priority. A significant barrier to the empowerment of women and girls is the persistence of traditional or cultural practices that portray them in negative, stereotypical ways. Paragraph 118 of the Beijing Platform for Action recognizes that “violence against women ... derives essentially from cultural patterns, in particular the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices ... that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family, the workplace, the community and society”. If girls grow up in a culture where inferior roles are allocated to women, their potential will be limited. External and internalized beliefs can limit the options and opportunities open to women and girls and contribute to the feminization of poverty and vulnerability to violence and exploitation.

4. Prostitution, like other forms of sexual violence, arises from the historical subordination of women to men. The sex industry is built upon and maintains the low social status of women and relegates them to the role of sexual merchandise. Commercial sexual exploitation is therefore a cultural practice that perpetuates gender inequality.

5. To promote the empowerment of women and girls, Governments must eliminate all forms of commercial sexual exploitation. Paragraph 130 of the Beijing Platform for Action urges Governments and regional and international organizations to “take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex”. A key root cause is the demand for prostitution that persists and flourishes as a result of governmental and societal acceptance of this harmful cultural practice. The demand must be addressed with comprehensive legislation that criminalizes buying commercial sex and profiting from the prostitution of others, by prosecuting buyers as well as traffickers, by educating young people about the harms of sexual exploitation and by addressing the media’s sexualization of women and girls and normalization of prostitution. Another root factor is the vulnerability of women and girls who are marginalized owing to poverty, racism or having a history of suffering other forms of gender-based violence. Providing

assistance to such vulnerable women, including housing, medical, educational, financial and mental health services, is essential in establishing a safety net for potential victims.

Role of men and boys in promoting gender equality and ending sexual violence

6. The Platform for Action recognizes that gender equality cannot be achieved without the participation of men and boys. Men and boys must be educated about their responsibility to end commercial sexual exploitation. Paragraph 108 (e) of the Beijing Platform for Action urges promotion of “programmes to educate and enable men to assume their responsibilities to prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases”. With regard to the elimination of violence against women, paragraph 119 of the Beijing Platform for Action states that “equality, partnership between women and men and respect for human dignity must permeate all stages of the socialization process. Educational systems should promote self-respect, mutual respect and cooperation between men and women”. Paragraph 120 of the Beijing Platform for Action states that “men’s groups mobilizing against gender violence are necessary allies for change”.

7. Unfortunately, in the past 15 years, there have been few groups mobilizing men to eliminate violence against women. Further, the role of men’s demand for commercial sexual exploitation has not been adequately addressed by most Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. Although article 9, paragraph 5, of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, requires States parties to adopt measures to “discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking”, some countries have adopted policies that normalize commercial sexual exploitation through the legalization of the sex industry, thereby increasing male demand for women and girls in prostitution, which fuels the global market for sex trafficking. As long as men and boys view women and girls as commodities to be bought and sold, they will be ingrained with the idea that every woman has her price, and all women will be seen and treated as inherently unequal. There is a need for greater accountability, including criminal penalties, for buyers of prostituted sex, who not only contribute to the harm suffered by victims but also create profit incentives for traffickers. Additionally, young men and boys must receive education to counteract social pressures to engage in commercial sexual exploitation and to learn about establishing gender equality in their relationships with women and girls in their families and communities.

8. Further, despite a clear mandate, in the Beijing Platform and the Millennium Development Goals, for Governments and all other actors to address the spread of HIV/AIDS in women and girls, factors such as men’s sexual violence, which make women vulnerable to this and other sexually transmitted diseases, are still inadequately addressed. The Platform for Action requires that all actors “review and amend laws and combat practices, as appropriate, that may contribute to women’s susceptibility to HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases, including enacting legislation against those sociocultural practices that contribute to it, and implement legislation, policies and practices to protect women, adolescents and young girls from discrimination related to HIV/AIDS” (Beijing Platform for Action, para. 108 (b)). The practice of selling and buying women and girls for men’s sexual

use is a long-standing practice which must be addressed to reduce and eliminate the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Portrayal of women in the media, including pornography

9. The Platform for Action is unequivocal that “any harmful aspect of certain traditional, customary or modern practices that violates the rights of women should be prohibited and eliminated” (para. 224). Further, the Platform requires “effective measures ... including appropriate legislation against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media” (para. 243 (f)).

10. Given our increasing reliance on various technologies and the virtual and online world over the past 15 years, aggressive action is needed to ensure that stereotypical, sexualized and violent images of women and girls are eliminated in the media. The pervasiveness of and easy access to pornography, especially on the Internet, only fuels harmful stereotypes that women and girls are sexual objects. Men and boys, as well as women and girls, not only become desensitized to the sexualized violence in pornography and other media, but also view it as normal in their lives. Thus the sexualized abuse and violence that is normalized in pornography is harmful not only to the women in it but to all members of society, who learn to accept these degrading images. Moreover, the more men accept the gendered violence that is a mainstay in pornography, the more likely they are to rationalize buying prostituted sex, thus increasing the demand for sex trafficking. The media is a powerful vehicle for promoting violence against women. The past 15 years have seen a mainstreaming of entertainment, including through the Internet and video games, that glamorizes sexual abuse of women. Taking appropriate measures to eliminate harmful media messaging, as well as promoting the inclusion of positive and empowering images of women, is essential, especially to educate girls and boys on the equal role of women in society.

Recommendations

11. We call on States to honor their commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by focusing on implementation aimed at eradicating violence against women. We appeal for action in the following areas:

(a) Ratifying and implementing international and regional conventions that seek to eliminate violence against women, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocol, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;

(b) Training and accountability of institutional players at all levels, including police, judges, prosecutors and other community leaders, to recognize exploited women and girls as crime victims, not as immoral or criminal;

(c) Strengthening laws and policies to assist victims of gender-based violence, including rape and sexual abuse;

(d) Criminalizing perpetrators of all crimes of sexual exploitation, including buyers and procurers of prostituted and trafficked women and girls;

(e) Creating economic programmes for women at risk of being trafficked and sexually exploited and raising awareness about the danger of trafficking;

(f) Adopting immigration remedies for victims of sexual violence and exploitation, including asylum and lawful residency;

(g) Supporting educational programmes addressing prevention of sexual violence in the broader context of gender equality, including education and empowerment for women and girls, and education on the harms of sexual violence and sexual stereotypes for men and boys;

(h) Increasing medical assistance for victims of sexual exploitation and other violence, including appropriate mental health services addressing their extensive trauma, depression, anxiety and drug dependency;

(i) Rejecting legalization or normalization of sexual violence or the lack of prosecution or enforcement of laws that attempt to hold perpetrators accountable;

(j) Recognizing the role of the media and Internet in promoting sexual violence and adopting measures to combat the growing sexualization of women and girls and abuse of women and girls in the production and consumption of pornography.

12. Fifteen years ago, the global community recognized that violence against women is an obstacle to gender equality. Unfortunately, there is still much work to be done for States and intergovernmental organizations to live up to the commitments made in Beijing. Immediate and unequivocal action must now be taken to stem the tide of continued commercial sexual exploitation and increased acceptability of this form of gender-based violence.



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-fourth session

1-12 March 2010

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the Association of Presbyterian Women of Aoteaora (New Zealand), Church Women United, Global Action on Aging, Lutheran World Federation, Presbyterian Church USA, Salvation Army, United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, World Conference of Religions for Peace, World Student Christian Federation, World Young Women's Christian Association and World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

Statement

Partners for change: faith-based response to the review of the Beijing Platform for Action

1. Ecumenical Women, a coalition of Christian organizations and denominations and non-governmental organizations, welcomes the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.
2. We affirm the promotion of gender equality and justice from a human rights perspective. We maintain that the contributions and empowerment of women and girls of all ages are fundamental, enshrined in the Platform for Action and international laws, and necessary for achieving all the Millennium Development Goals.
3. Despite 15 years of national policies and international agreement for advancing women's rights, the goals of the Platform for Action remain unfulfilled. Existing United Nations resources and mechanisms are inadequate for eradicating and addressing the deprivations of human dignity faced by women. Ecumenical Women and our coalition members urgently stress the importance of using the review process to advance the goals of the Platform for Action and commit ourselves as partners in that process.
4. The Platform for Action will remain unfulfilled unless it is recognized that existing institutional structures are inherently gender-biased and need to be critically examined and radically transformed. Institutional barriers (in governmental, corporate, social, academic, educational, civil, familial, ecclesiastical and other religious structures, and the United Nations system itself) prevent equality between men and women and deny women's rights as human rights.
5. Ecumenical Women affirms that God's world was meant to be one of abundance for all persons, with fundamental rights and dignity for both women and men. Women, however, are disproportionately robbed of this abundance. We are called to challenge the gender bias of institutions and seek justice for those who are blocked by institutional barriers.
6. Patriarchal understandings of gender, power and leadership; violence against women; limitations in the economic and educational advancement of women; and the extreme vulnerability of marginalized women are among the greatest barriers to women's advancement. Progress will require systemic institutional change.

Gender, power and leadership

7. Decision-making by today's leaders comes at the expense of the majority of women, men and communities by maintaining a system of patriarchy, gender constructs and the subordination of others. The impact of unjust power relations has resulted in widening inequality between women and men. Even with some notable advances, the majority of women's lives are still characterized by economic and political marginalization, poverty and violence.
8. Although women make significant contributions, their full potential and ability as decision makers are undervalued by society. Many women are socialized and relegated to marginalized roles or non-paid work, or are limited to low-wage professions with little decision-making power. For women who succeed in reaching

positions of power, some face a male-dominated culture that prompts them to perpetuate patterns of patriarchal leadership and then they are criticized for doing so.

9. Power relations between women and men pervade our society. Leadership and power structures in all institutions need to be critically analysed from a gender perspective. Civil, legal and sacred texts need to be reinterpreted using language that promotes gender equality and justice. The feminist principles of caring, sharing, consensus-building, creativity and partnership offer alternative models of leadership and power.

Violence against women

10. Despite numerous international resolutions, domestic abuse, rape, trafficking and other forms of violence against women and girls persist. Globally, more than 75 per cent of the violence against women is perpetrated by men and is rooted in a society that undervalues women. The media, when it presents women and girls as sexual objects, creates an environment that perpetuates this violation and is itself a form of violence.

11. Justice systems do little to prosecute those responsible for crimes against women and impunity reigns. Many survivors of rape are not provided with the legal, medical, social, and psychological care needed to recover, move to a place of healing and receive justice.

12. To end this cycle of violence, men must cease to be socialized into dominating masculinities. All should receive gender awareness education that fosters their involvement in peaceful, community-based movements for gender justice. The global White Ribbon Campaign is an example of men working to end violence against women.

Economic barriers to women's advancement

13. Women's economic empowerment means being able to use their rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions. This requires systems that promote women's inherent capabilities and equal access to opportunities and resources — most notably the ability to own and inherit land.

14. Women's multiple familial and community roles limit their opportunities for formal employment. Pension and social security systems based on formal market employment discriminate against stay-at-home parents and informal workers, among whom women are heavily represented.

15. Neoliberal macroeconomic policies put at risk the economic gains made by women over the last several decades. Women and girls of all ages, approximately two thirds of the world's impoverished, have little capacity to cope with financial shocks. The inadequacy, and even absence of, social protection policies have left millions of women in desperate straits. Employment stereotypes create discrepancies in hiring, with some areas favouring women as "cheap" labour or men as "breadwinners".

Education and training of women

16. Lack of access to quality education and social discrimination remain significant barriers to women's advancement. Girls account for 54 per cent of children not enrolled in primary school and are more likely to withdraw before completing a full course of education. Women aged 15 years and over account for two thirds of the world's illiterate population. Girls and women are particularly vulnerable in developing countries, in which educational environments fail to encourage their equal participation. In some regions, lack of appropriate sanitation facilities results in up to 10 per cent of girls leaving school once they begin menstruating. Without adequate education, women are less likely to have access to economic and technological services, and are unable to participate fully in society.

17. Even in countries with high education rates, women are discouraged from pursuing certain fields of study. Lack of economic support for women's education and societal pressures mean some academically strong women fail to complete advanced education.

18. While women and girls receive informal education and skills training in their homes or local communities, such education continues to be undervalued. This informal education held by women, however, can be essential to the planning, implementation and success of community or local development projects.

Vulnerability of marginalized women and girls

19. Marginalized women lack adequate Government protection and face social and legal marginalization and discrimination. These women include, but are not limited to, migrants; indigenous people; internally displaced or stateless people; refugees; ethnic, religious, racial or sexual minorities; disabled, divorced, older, poor, homeless, trafficked or rural persons; single parents; and prisoners.

20. Many migrant women are denied the rights and services guaranteed to citizens and cannot access legal protections offered by their host countries — most notably for work-related abuses.

21. Indigenous women face environmental degradation, climate change, seizures of sacred land and traditional territories, cultural discrimination, racism, and limits on resource ownership. Access to resources is increasingly limited and controlled by patriarchal structures. States and transnational corporations decimate natural landscapes, and criminalize or target indigenous owners protecting their land.

22. Trafficked women and girls, seen as commodities, are victims of criminal activities that strip them of their fundamental human rights and dignity. Many are poor, less educated and unaware of their rights. Despite greater attention to trafficking, national and international implementation of related policies remains insufficient.

Ecumenical Women, therefore, urges the following action:

23. By the Commission on the Status of Women:

(a) To work closely with the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to ensure that the vision of the GEAR Campaign is enacted within the United Nations and at the national and international levels;

(b) To fulfil its mandate as stated in Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/22 to promote, monitor and review State progress on the Platform for Action;

(c) To produce recommendations on the Platform for Action at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women for adoption by the General Assembly;

(d) To ensure that women's voices are heard at the United Nations by setting an agenda for the advancement of women's rights in consultation with civil society, non-governmental organizations and the global South;

(e) To choose the theme of positive masculinity as a focus of a future session of the Commission on the Status of Women in order to engender mutual partnership in addressing women's rights.

24. By the United Nations community:

(a) The General Assembly should fund and implement its resolution 63/311;

(b) The United Nations, using a coherent system, should end gender inequalities within all its institutions;

(c) Women must be involved in all levels of planning and implementation;

(d) The United Nations should work in partnership with civil society for maximum and sustainable impact;

(e) According to its own resolutions, the Security Council must enable United Nations peacekeeping missions to protect women and girls who are trapped in combat zones, especially from sexual violence.

25. By United Nations Member States:

(a) To guarantee that adequate funding is available to fulfil all laws and policies aimed at advancing women's rights;

(b) To "engender" institutions by reforming structures, policies and activities in order to reflect the different experiences, leadership styles and ways of working between women and men;

(c) To ratify, implement and remove any reservations to existing international treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, with particular attention to women's advancement, the provision of justice and an end to impunity;

(d) To implement Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) and General Assembly resolutions 63/155 and 63/156 with regard to violence against women in armed conflict;

(e) To motivate men to partner women in ending violence and discrimination against women through positive masculinities training, gender awareness and human rights education;

(f) To ensure women's full participation in the economic sector by removing legal, educational, employment, ownership and social service barriers; creating incentives; and enabling women's decision-making in micro- and macroeconomic policies;

(g) To include women's uncompensated work in calculations of gross domestic product, quality of life and international economic indices; provide compensation for caretaking and informal roles; and guarantee pensions and social security systems that count uncompensated labour as work;

(h) To ensure women's equal access to education and training through:

(i) The removal of all barriers to women's educational success;

(ii) An increase in public spending for both informal and formal education;

(iii) The creation of incentive programmes to encourage girls' participation in primary education;

(iv) The establishment of human rights and community education programmes;

(v) The development of gender-inclusive teacher training and curricula;

(vi) Modernization of school sanitation facilities;

(vii) Promotion of educational models that equip women, especially marginalized women, to assume positions of leadership and decision-making;

(viii) Reporting of and improvement in girls' participation and the gender and cultural sensitivity of educational environments.

26. In addition, it should be ensured that marginalized women receive greater attention and are guaranteed full coverage of social services, equal rights and legal protection, regardless of legal status.

27. Marginalized women should be engaged within the political, economic, legal and social arenas as critical stakeholders in policymaking and decision-making.

28. Funding should be provided for anti-bias education at the local and national levels with a view to eradicating social stigmas, stereotypes and discrimination.

29. Reparations should be provided for deprivations to marginalized communities, particularly the women of those communities.